

Acquisition Reform Success Story

New Generation Heater Acquisition

Program Manager:

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Program Background

The H-1 ground support heater has experienced numerous problems in the past. Users are very dissatisfied because the heaters coke after only a short period, requiring complete disassembly and cleaning, thus reducing availability. Coking is also a safety hazard. Previous acquisitions utilized purchase descriptions and Government-owned drawings.

Program Description

Recognizing that industry has expertise to design products to meet the Government's need, the program office initiated a market survey based on performance characteristics and exploring the possibility of obtaining a strictly commercial item. Responses revealed that no COTS or strictly commercial item exists, however, there are sources capable of modifying. Based on this information and user input, a Statement of Objective (SOO) and performance specification were developed and a synopsis acquisition strategy conference with industry was held. Individual meetings with contractors were also encouraged to address proposed acquisition methodology and schedule. Users also participated in this meeting and, based on the information exchanged, performance requirements were lowered to those which industry could reasonably and affordably provide while still satisfying our needs. The RFP requires offerors to provide a SOW in response to the SOO and provides the opportunity to submit CDRLs they believe necessary to support their proposal.

How Streamlining Made A Difference

- The open interchange made possible through early industry involvement benefited both the Air Force and industry by arriving at optimum requirements definition. The more open atmosphere appears to have improved cooperation between Government and industry, and to have improved industry's perception of fairness.
- The RFP contains 15 CDRLs, including provisioning and technical manuals, compared to previous RFPs which have included numerous CDRLs for first article test, etc. This RFP allows respondents to make data recommendations. This RFP contains only 12 military standards and specifications, and utilized commercial standards to the maximum extent possible.
- Because of industry input, we expect proposals and resulting contract to produce equipment which meets the requirement at a lower price, and to preclude the numerous ECPs and VECPs experienced in past acquisitions.

Bottom Line: Industry and user involvement in the early stages of acquisition will reduce acquisition time, provide a more satisfactory product, and improve availability and user effectiveness.